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# CHILD WELFARE

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# COTTAGE PARENT AND CASEWORKER—A TEAM

Abraham J. Simon

Superintendent, Jewish Children's Home,  
St. Louis, Missouri

*It has been no small problem to introduce the caseworker into the children's institution. Neither has it been easy to integrate the services of the caseworker with that of the cottage parent. The experience described in this paper should serve as a basis for discussion in institutions all over the country.*

INSTITUTIONS have thought of themselves in the past as substitutes for the child's home, boarding schools and more recently as an opportunity for group experience. Each of these has come in turn to seem unreal as a total concept of the institution's function although each has some real basis. All seem to us now to be subordinate to a basic concept: that of the institution as a social welfare agency which helps parents unable to rear their own children by providing care for the children, and which enables parents to assume responsibility progressively until they need agency help no longer. If parents have not the ability for such development, children as well as the agency need to take that into account. Experience in allocating children to one foster family or institutional care, when both are equally available, shows that the institution has a special kind of service to offer.

Children in institutions have special needs. They have experienced more injury and neglect by far than average children. Separation from parents and care by strangers place them in a unique position. They have an abnormal relationship with their parents. Into the institution, also, come disturbed and difficult children who cannot use foster family care well, but whom the institution can serve.

## Implementing the Function of the Institution

The key members of an institution's staff are cottage parents and caseworkers. Both groups need to know about the rearing of normal children as well as the rearing of these disturbed, unhappy children living away from home. Together, the cottage parent and the caseworker represent the institution to the child and to his family; they have simultaneous associations with both. What are their respective responsibilities?

The cottage parent meets the child's physical and emotional needs on the practical level, and is responsible for the overt behavior of child and parents. How child and parents feel about her, and about the agency, is important, but she is not responsible for dealing with it.

The caseworker, while understanding and appreciating the meaning of behavior, deals primarily with the feelings of the child and the family about the agency, and with their reactions to and use of placement. She uncovers the factual data necessary to understanding each child. She attempts to alter attitudes through relationships.

From the combined knowledge and experience of cottage parent and caseworker, a diagnosis and treatment plan can be derived. In such a plan the cottage parent represents a reasonable and acceptable reality, while the caseworker helps parents and child to work out a more satisfactory adjustment to their reality.

## Requirements for Cottage Parents

During the past two decades, considerable wisdom has accumulated in the social sciences as to concepts of adjustment, and as to methods of developing potentialities for normal living. Once the education, supervision, and in-service training of institutional personnel are related to this accumulated knowledge, institutions will improve.

Specifically, good cottage parents are usually old enough to have personal maturity and a varied life experience. High school graduation is desirable but not necessary. Factors making for continued work stability are the cottage parent's need of a home, and her unsatisfied drive to love and care for children, without special demands for appreciation in return.

The salary level of cottage parents should be at least comparable to the earnings of a skilled artisan. Important personality qualifications are intelligence, open-mindedness to new or unaccustomed ideas, stability without rigidity, flexibility and patience in interpersonal relations, and the gift of having children like them. Also important is the ability to keep a clean house, maintain order within reasonable limits, and adhere to general rules and regulations.

The cottage parent should be entirely responsible for the management of the cottage. Everything affecting the children and the cottage should be channeled through her. The role very definitely parallels the authority and responsibility of a parent in her own home: responsibility and authority to act in whatever ways she sees fit, subject only to review by

the next higher authority, her supervisor. The training of the cottage parent is the responsibility of supervisory personnel, and under present conditions is the only available training for cottage parents.

Processes for this training are fourfold:

- a. Formal education through extension courses and seminars;
- b. Staff meetings;
- c. Working relationship between caseworker and cottage parent;
- d. Working relationship between cottage parent and her supervisor.

In large institutions, a significant number of cottage parents come and go without staying long enough to become reasonably experienced in their work. The first two years constitute the period of highest turnover. A course of study or a seminar on institutional child care, led by a member of the supervisory staff, could do much to stabilize this group through the development of healthy attitudes toward the work and the acquisition of knowledge. Small institutions find it more practical to arrange a course of study as a co-operative venture under the sponsorship of a school of social work or a council of social agencies. Such a group has the value of an interagency exchange of experience. Should both of these possibilities be unachievable, the supervisor may find it necessary to transmit information, to lecture, and otherwise to educate cottage parents on a tutorial basis.

The writer gave an extension course under the joint auspices of the George Warren Brown School of Social Work of Washington University, and the Social Planning Council of St. Louis, for people employed by child care institutions of that area. The syllabus of the course includes:

1. Types of institutions: the detention home; the institution for the physically or mentally handicapped, for the insane; the study and treatment home; institutions for dependent, neglected, and delinquent children. Congregate and cottage types: ratio of adult to child population.
2. Situations leading to placement; forms of placement: foster families and institutions. The intake process: study and allocation. The institution and the foster home, or the institution vs. the foster home. Criteria for allocation.
3. The institution as a social agency; its function and responsibilities to the community; relationships with other agencies. Standards for institutional child care: housing, standard of living and adult supervision; the special services: education, recreation, pediatrics, dentistry, psychology, psychiatry, casework, group work. The case record.
4. The child as an individual; the substitute parent-child relationship; the phenomenon of transference and its appearance in staff-child relationships. The undercare program: diagnosis and treatment; cottage parent-caseworker relationship; the cottage parent-supervisor relationship; the caseworker-supervisor relationship; parent-child relationships and their effect on concurrent institutional staff-child relationships. The approach to the individual child and familial rehabilitation; the role of the caseworker.

5. The child as a member of a group. Heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings; the cottage group: clique associations within the cottage and among cottages, group factors that inhibit or stimulate growth. Adult and child group leadership. The cottage parent as group leader: the cottage atmosphere, the use of the group to stimulate more mature adjustment. Social group work and recreation in the institution.
6. Individual and group ways of helping children make more mature adjustments while in placement; the staff as a helping group.
7. Evaluation of the child's development and progress while under care.
8. Discharge: the goal of the under care program; after care.

## The Cottage Parent-Caseworker Relationship

A sound relationship with caseworkers can contribute to good cottage parent practice. No cottage parent should be expected to work with more than three caseworkers. If the agency can by policy offer each cottage only two caseworkers, so much the better. This relationship in the care of a child must be a reciprocal one. Both participants have relationships with child and family. Both find themselves frequently dealing with the same problems, or with different aspects of the same problem. It is very necessary that each understand clearly his responsibility, respect the other's competence, and tolerate and accept the other's weaknesses. Above all, the two must operate continuously as peers in a common venture, aware of each other's insights and experience in the situation. Each must feel free to criticize, to be openminded about criticism, and to be responsible for her own attitudes and actions.

Regularly planned consultations, preferably on a weekly basis, are the only way of testing attitudes against the known facts, and of arriving at sound understandings. This is the only technique by which the agency plan can be implemented and the caseworker and cottage parent co-ordinate their practices. The schedule of the staff must allow time for consultations.

Who shall be held responsible for the cottage parent-caseworker relationship? It is not too difficult for the two groups to get into conflict because of differences in education, social status and prestige. The emotional demands of both jobs are great, and create a strain which can affect staff relationships, indicated by absence of relationship, open conflict or domination. Neither will accept advice from a person inexperienced in his own work. There is a simple possible solution: the supervision of the cottage parent-caseworker team by a supervisor competent in both jobs. No other structure can as adequately train a caseworker for institutional practice, or guarantee as adequate training for the cottage parent.



This pattern of cottage parent-caseworker consultation directed by their supervisor is proposed as a demonstrated and efficient process through which every case situation and its key personnel can be systematically supervised.\*

### The Institutional Staff Meeting

The staff meeting provides an opportunity for those working together to sense how they feel toward one another, and at least hear administrative bulletins, or listen to a speaker. Staff consultation over daily problems involves thoughtful planning. At its highest level, the staff meeting can be the clinic in which institutional problems can be examined completely by the staff. Through group thinking, the difficulties can be evaluated and solutions devised. Where complaints have an insufficient reality basis, difficulties are created by certain attitudes, a group judgment to that effect, followed up by personal discussion with the supervisor, can resolve the difficulty. The agenda of staff meetings should be the responsibility of the practitioners, inasmuch as they are usually the first to realize problems. Frequency of meetings depends upon staff needs. Minutes of staff meetings ideally serve as a basis for establishing practice. Nothing better than such minutes can be used to introduce new staff members to the job under responsible leadership and supervisory sense of proportion.

### The Supervisory Conference

Our last step in training overlaps and supplements the first three. In individual conferences, the supervisor is able to evaluate the cottage parent's use of opportunities for formal education, and of in-service training facilities. The supervisory process with the cottage parent is largely the same as with the caseworker. The teaching process is adjusted in both tempo and content to the needs, concerns and capacity of each individual. Inasmuch as the cottage parent does not keep records, however, material for supervision comes from direct observation and verbal reports.

The cottage parent's problems may be allayed by bringing known data into connection. Or the caseworker and the cottage mother may not have shared information. This very withholding creates, or is part of, a problem situation. The freedom with which information is shared is a reliable index of the confidence between cottage parents and caseworkers.

\* A running record of such practice in one cottage of the Jewish Children's Home of St. Louis is on file in the record library of the Child Welfare League, and is available for those interested.

Supervisory guidance is needed also to further their mutual understanding.

"Cottage atmosphere," "quality of the group life, or "cottage morale" is frequently mentioned as an essential factor in a child's development in the cottage. Constructive group experience is a unique value which an institution can offer. Clarity as to the meaning of "cottage atmosphere" is important. The supervisor can evaluate with the cottage parent the quality of her cottage's "atmosphere," understand how it got that way, decide what modifications are necessary and explore how they can best be made.

"Atmosphere" is a term with which we attempt to describe the collective emotional state and guiding values of the people living together in a cottage. The feelings of any one child are usually a mixture of love (affection, well-being, giving), hate (hostility, resistance, taking) and depression (anxiety, self-blame, inviting punishment). In any prevailing emotional trend, one of these feelings tends to dominate the others and to represent the total person. A child, by virtue of age-group associations and prevailing emotional trend, spontaneously acquires membership in a cottage clique which has its own prevailing emotional trends. Interaction among individuals and cliques creates "group atmosphere."

The prevailing emotional state of the adult leader strengthens or weakens individual and inter-clique trends. The ideal cottage atmosphere develops when the cottage parent as a leader loves the children, and stimulates their loving and giving tendencies. Then, hating and taking fail to earn satisfactions, and security makes self-blame and punishment less necessary.

In a typical situation, the cottage parent is loving and giving, and the children are unable, to varying degrees, to accept her love because of their hostilities and anxieties. As the weights of love and hate balance each other, an imaginary register can be said to point to an emotional tone for the cottage. The controlling factor is the cottage parent. When her feelings are positive, hostility and depression wane and happiness and well-being prevail. When she is angry or irritable, the children become hostile and resistant, or else submissive so that fear and acceptance of punishment settle on the cottage.

Certain conditions other than the feelings brought to the cottage by children and adults influence the atmosphere. For example, a small cottage population with a wide scatter of ages, and an open urban location with freedom of movement and contacts in the community, will lessen the intensity of cottage atmosphere and diminish its impact on any one child. On the other hand, rural isolation and homogeneous age groupings in a closed institution intensify the

pressure of cottage atmosphere beyond all reason. Its impact can be crushing.

Only with a supervisor can the subtleties of "cottage atmosphere" be examined in an objective, helping way, and its elements identified.

The cottage parent's goal is to maintain a positive cottage atmosphere and good morale in spite of the combative drives of individuals or cliques. She guides loyalties toward maintaining standards, and toward self-discipline and self-development. In this way she creates a constructive group life and a cottage atmosphere in which each child's capacity for growth has an optimum opportunity for development.

### The Training of the Caseworker

The average graduate of a school of social work who becomes a caseworker in an institution has undoubtedly had a well-developed sequence of courses in the theory and practice of social casework. She may have had a general course in child welfare; less probably, a course in foster family care. Rarely indeed has she studied institutional child care or done field work in a children's institution.

The institutional caseworker's training could be improved by familiarity with the hour-to-hour details of an institution's operations. Some previous work with children in groups, as either a camp counselor or a club leader, would be particularly helpful. Really ideal would be experience as a cottage parent, from which caseworkers have gained increased accuracy in casework study, and have learned to formulate more realistic plans. That the experience makes for more understanding relationships with cottage parents goes without saying.

There are special problems in relating the casework function to the structure of an institution. In an institution, the caseworker does not exclusively represent the agency. She is one of a number of employees, every one of whom may at one time or another represent the agency, and all of whom may have relationships with the client. Safeguarding of sound casework practice in institutions is essential, but an acceptance of the differences between the structure of an institution and that of other agencies is equally important. To illustrate: a worker may have operated for years in an agency where service is administered exclusively by casework. This same worker will have to learn that some children can use institutional service with great benefit, though they have no contact with a caseworker.

A member of an institutional staff finds problems not experienced by the sole representative of an agency. When some partners on the team have a lower social status and salary, and also belong to an older age group, an unusually difficult set of factors is presented. An awareness of these factors and a planful attempt to work them out maturely, while maintaining good casework standards and integrating her special function with the other services of the institution—that is the institutional caseworker's special task.

Can we afford to spend working time on a training program? There is only one possible answer. We can't afford not to. The increased effectiveness of the service resulting from a training program is its justification. Education and training do increase staff effectiveness and productivity. There is no more valuable contribution the supervisory and executive personnel can make to the institution.

## LIFE IN A DAY NURSERY\*

**Dorothy H. Beers**

Director, Bethany Day Nursery,  
New York City

*A day nursery fulfills its function as it helps the children develop a sense of responsibility and courage to tackle the responsibility.*

**AS** I entered my school the other morning I met five-year-old Lewis standing in the hall looking somewhat perplexed—holding a pad of paper in one hand, a pencil in the other. Catching sight of me, his face cleared a bit and he said, "Mrs. Beers, do you think I need to go upstairs to get my coat before I go out to the yard to ask Fran how many children she has?" I replied that it was pretty cold that day and that I thought he should wear his coat—and Lewis started

up the stairs with a cheerful "O.K. I'll get it." And I thought with satisfaction of the progress Lewis is making. Only a little more than a year ago at the age of four he needed adult direction for nearly all routines. He was a passive member of the group. His behavior was so infantile and today he is so resourceful, such a trustworthy five-year-old.

In this incident several kinds of responsibility were involved. Lewis was performing an important school job—he was getting from each group teacher the attendance of children and adults for that day;

\* Presented at New Jersey Welfare Council Annual Conference, November 30, 1948.

information which the cook must have by 10:00 A.M. This job rotates among the five-year-olds and has attached to it great prestige since it means traveling around a six-story building alone, being sure to cover each group, getting the job done as quickly as possible, and then returning, without being told, to the five-year-old playroom. In addition, it poses such problems as finding out where a group is if not in its room, and, as on this day, deciding for yourself whether you need a coat to make a quick trip out of doors. To do this job a child must take responsibility for his own behavior, since no adult accompanies him, supervises or limits his actions; he takes responsibility for the whole school, since preparation of the right amount of food for everyone's lunch depends on his accounting to the cook, and he has to develop and use his own judgment when meeting a new situation such as visiting the group in the yard without a coat. He is accepting responsibility for himself and for adhering to an accustomed pattern of action when he realizes that he should probably wear a coat even though no adult has told him so, and when he is unsure of his own judgment he takes action by seeking information from a qualified source.

Children in the day nursery are growing and developing just as are children in a family; indeed they are the same children who at night and on week ends live with their families, sharing their experiences and contributing their own personalities to the family culture. So it is especially important that the day nursery program and goals be closely allied to those of the family, since a day nursery must always complement the home and never substitute for it.

We know that young children learn through imitation as well as through experimentation, and in the home many of these experiences are often related to caring for the family unit. Going to the grocery store with mother, wiping dishes, stirring the cake, dusting, sweeping the floor, making beds—little children love to help mother do these things—they feel closer to her and more grown up in so doing.

When a child spends most of his waking hours in a day nursery he misses this natural opportunity since mother usually does these things at night after he is asleep or before she calls for him, and even if by chance he is in the kitchen when mother is getting supper, he is usually a source of irritation to this tired, harassed parent. His clumsy attempts to help may very well be so rebuffed that he loses for all time the desire to participate or even experiment.

### **Responsible Child Becomes Responsible Adult**

We in the nursery can help mother to understand the significance of these beginning attempts to take a

responsible role, but even more important are the opportunities we should be offering the child to feel like a responsible, capable person. He must feel himself to be one before he can act as one.

In the nursery he can and should have a very real part in making possible a happy, smoothly running group life. We need to help him realize that the work to be done is the world's work and that no particular kind or group of persons should be solely responsible for it. As he grows older, he can realize that certain kinds of work are related to individual skills and abilities, but at the preschool age he should have wide experiences and a chance to develop these skills by doing. He may help to set the table for lunch, he can pass the sandwiches and may on occasion help to make them. He may serve his own plate, he may have a turn serving everyone's plate; he calls the children to lunch, he wipes up his own spills and maybe those of the new little girl. He sometimes acts as conductor for the rhythms or singing. He should always have a responsible role in putting away toys without particular emphasis on those with which he played, but rather on the fact that the room must be prepared for the next activity and everyone assists. He can help get the cots ready for nap. Children can wash the paint brushes and jars, sandpaper the splintery blocks, paint some of the equipment. They may wash shelves, tables, chairs, doll's clothes; they may take care of the fish, turtles and plants; they help to prepare for school parties; they operate the record player, being careful not to scratch or break the records. If the child is steady enough, he goes back alone to the playroom for the forgotten sweater. Sometimes, if he is a very responsible person, he may even help the school janitor with his work, such as washing down the stairs or putting canned goods away on shelves.

### **Individualize the Child**

If this sounds as if the child in the day nursery is a household drudge with no time to play, it must be remembered that all of these things do not happen every day, that the child's age and individual skills and abilities determine what and how much he will do, that these jobs are shared and rotated among the children, and that in almost every experience the teacher or other adult is sharing it with him and constantly alert to signs of frustration, fatigue or waning interest.

Teachers also help the children to grow into another kind of responsibility—that of caring for themselves—the so-called habit training. It is much more than that, however—it is the child's acknowledgment to himself that he has reached a point of



physical independence with consequent decrease in the need for adult supervision and assistance. It is an important step toward emotional independence and maturity.

### **Self-discipline Comes with Security**

A third kind of responsibility is not related to physical or motor skills but rather to a child's ability to determine socially acceptable behavior and to control his own actions toward that end. This is the subtle thing we call self-discipline and is developed through the child's growing sense of security and through his relationship to the adults in his world. His need for security includes a need for broad but definite limits within which he has freedom to make choices and to solve his own problems, and an awareness that authority exists as a kindly, but firm, foundation for all freedom.

And what of the child who cannot control his own behavior, who cannot accept limits, who knows how to dress himself but will not, who always evades cleanup time? Is he spoiled, is he lazy, is he retarded? Probably none of these things—he is quite likely to be a child who has never had his normal demands satisfied until his abnormal behavior forced action, or he may be one whose physical needs have been met without awareness of his accompanying need for affection, or he may have been overprotected and had all his problems solved for him to the point where his normal curiosity and desire to experiment are dulled, or perverted into fears.

The teacher in the day nursery must then know what kind of child he is, what his previous experiences have been, what his mother's feelings are about him, whether he is ready for responsibility. A good program will begin with the child where he is, and if the nursery is to fulfill its obligation to complement the home, it must offer the child opportunities for growth that the home is not able to give. The child needs to be loved, to feel wanted and safe, above all else. He must find within the nursery the assurance that this is so. If he needs to have his coat and hat put on every day for six weeks, even though he and his teacher both know he can do it, he should have them put on for him with loving kindness, since only when he is sure that someone will continue to take care of him when he really needs it, will he be able to go on to the next step away from demanding evidence of such care.

### **Day Care is a Professional Service**

To the families who bring their children to the day nursery, the child's needs may not seem dramatic as

compared with the crises that the family faces—the necessity to earn a living, ill-health of a parent, inadequate housing, unpaid bills, relatives in trouble or in need, unhappy marriages, desertion by a parent. To these people the preschooler who is still so small that he can be picked up and carried, frequently seems completely well cared for if he attends a day nursery. To the child, this often seems like complete separation from those he loves. And so his normal development is interrupted, his behavior often regresses to a level where more and more demands for physical reassurance appear. The nursery must understand what these experiences mean to the child. The day nursery teacher must be alert to behavior which deviates from the normal, for this is the child's way of telling you that he and the world are out of step. In planning a program the goal must include strengthening the family and alleviating home pressures. Such a program requires skilled personnel.

The challenge, then, for the day nursery is to obtain full and meaningful information about the child's environment and background, to use it so that the teacher in the nursery may modify her program in terms of the individual child while yet retaining the values of group experience. This would offer the child not only security, comfort, reassurance, but stimulation and a constantly unfolding concept of himself as a maturing, growing, capable personality.

## **REGIONAL CONFERENCES**

The Ohio Valley Regional Conference will be held March 17, 18 and 19, 1949, at the Netherland Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio. The Chairman is Mr. Duane W. Christy, Executive Vice-President of The Children's Home of Cincinnati.

The Eastern Regional Conference will be held April 7, 8 and 9, 1949, at the Ambassador Hotel, Atlantic City, New Jersey. The Chairman is Mr. Walter P. Townsend, General Secretary, Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania.

The Midwest Regional Conference will be held May 1 to 4, 1949, at the Hotel LaSalle, Chicago, Illinois. The Chairman is Mrs. Mary Lawrence, Executive Director, Jewish Children's Bureau of Chicago.

The New England Regional Conference will be held June 6 and 7, 1949, at the Wentworth-by-the-Sea, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Chairman is Mrs. Jeanette H. Melton, General Secretary, New Hampshire Children's Aid Society.



# ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Milton E. Bell

Board Member, The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Oregon

*The symposium was introduced by Callman Rawley in the December and January issues of CHILD WELFARE. Further comments are invited.*

"... and still the Queen cried 'Faster! Faster!' and dragged her along. 'Are we nearly there?' Alice managed to pant out at last.

"Nearly there!" the Queen repeated. "Why, we passed it ten minutes ago! Faster!" And they ran for a time in silence.

"Now! Now!" cried the Queen. "Faster! Faster!" And they went so fast that at last they seemed to skim through the air, hardly touching the ground with their feet, till suddenly, just as Alice was getting quite exhausted, they stopped, and she found herself sitting on the ground, breathless and giddy.

Alice looked around her in great surprise. "Why, I do believe we've been under this tree the whole time! Everything's just as it was!"

"Of course it is," said the Queen. "What would you have it?"

"Well, in *our* country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast for a long time as we've been doing."

"A slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that."

**AND** so, too, social agencies must run as fast as they can to stay where they are today. Technical knowledge has been increasing at so rapid a pace that sluggish agencies soon become laggards. Shifting populations and changing community needs require that an agency exercise a high degree of vigilance and adaptability to maintain its effectiveness. Constantly rising costs bring higher budgets which must be met. Responsibility for a dynamic program rests squarely in the laps of board members and professional staffs alike. It is an era when not to be alert and pressing forward means losing hard won gains, slowly perhaps, but surely.

"I'd rather not try, please!" said Alice. "I'm quite content to stay here."

This human tendency has affected many a board member. It is easy to become satisfied with the status quo without realizing that to rest on one's laurels is a sure way to become a "has been."

"Where do you come from?" said the Red Queen. "And where are you going? Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time."

Let's take a quick look at where we have been. There was a time when many boards had to struggle with every minute detail of agency operation. They donated the pencils, checked the milk supply, interviewed every applicant for service. Many hours and whole days were sometimes spent in anguished debate and struggle. Funds were solicited personally and

budgets were little more than mirages. The agency staffs consisted of a small number of untrained workers and whatever volunteers were available. These were necessary steps in the evolution of community service, but the progress which took place did not occur automatically. Enterprising boards sought for better-qualified staff, and together they tried out new methods or borrowed ideas from other agencies and professions. The proof that time alone contains no magic spell is found in those organizations which still are limping along a hundred years behind the times. But let's not dwell longer on pictures of the past.

## Where Are We Now?

Today, as yesterday, the Board sponsors the agency. The Board is the core, the very foundation of a private agency. It stands before the community as the official, tangible, and accepted symbol of the agency. Thus many well-known and highly respected citizens are found lending prestige and assurance to worthy agencies as board members.

The Board has always chosen and been responsible for the choice of executive who directs the actual work of the agency. Today most executives have post-graduate professional training in social work with years of practical experience.

The Board will continue to make and be responsible for all major policy decisions. In many cases today major policy is studied first by the professional staff which, through direct contact with the work, is best able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a contemplated change. Nevertheless, each Board member can honestly feel that he contributed to the making of that policy by deciding its final acceptance or rejection, and by being responsible before the community for the consequence.

The Board will continue to raise money and to influence favorable budgets from Community Chests and other sources of financial support. The nebulous budget of the past is now an active part of agency functioning. Constricting where that is necessary, the modern budget also sets new objectives, and guides the way toward desired goals.

In providing adequate financial support, the Board must know the program and then interpret as

*(Continued on page 12)*

## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

### Scholarship, Fellowship and Work-Study Plans

**C**ONVICTION that real help can be given best by professionally qualified workers has led League member agencies over a period of years to invest appreciable sums in the education and training of staff members and students in child welfare.

Inquiries about plans and experiences of agencies offering educational opportunities show the extent of interest. Responsibility for making scholarship funds available for training as a means of insuring better service to the children is increasingly being assumed by agencies. The ways in which the agencies administer the educational plans here reported are taken from current reports on the scholarship and work-study plans of member agencies plus the information obtained two years ago about scholarship and field work opportunities offered by all League member agencies.

"We contribute \$2,000 a year to the School of Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University. The school is responsible for distribution of these funds which are not limited to students in training in various branches of our agency. As a matter of fact, some students in our agency do not receive any grant from the school. There is no obligation on the part of a recipient of a grant to our agency. The students placed with us have no relationship to our grant to the school."

This is the only agency among the 20 currently reporting on their practices which offers a grant directly to a school of social work. However, in an earlier survey\* we found a few agencies who followed this plan. The policy stems from the conviction that the best way to insure an adequate number of qualified social workers in any one agency is to increase the number of professionally qualified people in the field as a whole. This philosophy is supported by the experience of the United States Children's Bureau in assisting states to provide professional education through use of Federal Child Welfare Service Funds. Wartime training of nurses was based on this premise as is the professional training plan followed by the United States Public Health Service in the administration of the National Mental Health Program.

The majority of League member agencies still use all or part of their scholarship funds for professional training for staff members or potential staff members, each agency hoping to realize benefits directly. The following are fairly typical scholarship plans used as one method of recruiting staff:

"Each year we grant one scholarship contemplating two years of graduate study for which a total of \$1,800 is given. The money is

\* Reported in the *BULLETIN*, Child Welfare League of America, November, 1946. "What Are We Doing About Staff Shortages?" by Mary C. Keeley.

paid out as follows: \$300 the first semester, \$400 the second, \$500 the third, and \$600 the fourth semester. An agreement is signed by the worker whereby she agrees to remain in the employ of the agency for at least one year after completion of graduate study. We have had no instances of a worker failing to return to the agency after having received a scholarship but should that occur, we would ask for repayment of the amount actually given."

"Our agency has a scholarship plan which is available either for people in the agency or for students who make application for this scholarship. During the past several years we have had both recent college graduates and some people who have been out of school for a few years who have received scholarships. We have no hard and fast rule on the length of time nor age, although we have refused scholarships to some people who have been out of school for quite a number of years. . . . We have found that the people who have worked for a couple of years have made good scholarship students as they are more mature and ready to accept professional training. We have two different scholarships, one of which is in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin. Under this plan the students selected jointly by the school and agency have one year of their field work with us and the other year at an agency that is mutually agreeable to the three of us. At the present time, three students under this plan are receiving \$125 per month for the two years of training and one student is receiving the scholarship for the second year only. All the students have agreed to return to the agency for a minimum of one year paid employment or else refund an amount equal to the tuition payments. This is not designed to cover complete cost but we find that the students will be able to get along nicely on it. Our other plan is for students attending schools out of the state. Because of the variation in the amount of tuition, distance from this locality and costs of living in the various cities, we have paid full tuition and \$75 per month not to exceed a total grant of \$1,800 for these scholarships. Again the agreement is that the students will refund the amount of tuition if they do not return to the agency for a period of at least one year."

"Our professional employees are allowed to attend a graduate school of social work at one-half their annual salary after three years of service with the agency. They are allowed full salary for attendance at a graduate school after five years' service. The workers do not have to sign a contract but are expected to return to the agency for at least one year following their training period. We do not limit our plan to recent college graduates but definitely prefer to send our older, more mature untrained case workers who have had experience and who have their roots firmly embedded in the community life so that they are much more apt to return and remain with the agency after their graduate training."

Agency boards and executives often feel the need to have the recipient of scholarship funds agree to remain with the agency for a time. However, few agencies now require a contract or agreement in writing. The following comments would indicate that the agencies with the most experience in helping financially in the education of workers have flexible policies in this respect:

"We do have a scholarship plan which has been in effect now for several years. We think it has worked a great benefit both for the students and for the agency. Our scholarship grant is one hundred dollars (\$100) per month during the school term. If we employ the worker during the summer, which is usually the case, the employment is on a current salary basis. Until the present time, this sum has appeared to be adequate. We have never operated on a formal contract basis. Ordinarily the only confirmation which we have found necessary is a letter to the student setting forth the

terms of the agreement and confirming the details discussed in the personal interview. The worker agrees to remain with the agency for one year following the completion of the period of training. . . . We select a candidate who has the qualifications necessary for a good adjustment in the field of social case work. We recommend a candidate but we have no control over the selection of the student by the school of social work as this must be the responsibility of the school. Because the candidate is not accepted at one school does not necessarily mean that that particular candidate may not be accepted by another school. We make it very clear to the candidate that all we can do is refer the candidate to the school of social work and send a letter of recommendation. . . . We have followed this training program now for approximately twelve years and have reaped many beneficial results from it. A small city such as ours is at a great disadvantage in attracting personnel from the larger areas. Also, it has always seemed to me that it was a good plan for local qualified persons to be sufficiently interested in their community to want to secure the training. Some of those we have trained have remained with the agency for a period of time, others have gone elsewhere. We have always been fortunate to have a staff with diversified training backgrounds, and many schools represented so that we have not become 'local' or ingrown.

"We have given two scholarships in recent years to staff members, one a partly trained worker and the other a young untrained worker. As outlined here, study leave is up to one year for professional staff members and may be requested at the end of the one year service. . . . A prerequisite for study leave is acceptance by a school of social work approved by the agency. Professional staff members receive one half of their salary up to one year. A staff member is required to remain with the society one year after completion of the course. Staff members who decide not to return to the society after this study period will be required to refund the amount of salary paid.

"We have also given many fellowships during the past few years to second-year students in schools of social work during the field placement of the students with our agency. These fellowships now are in the amount of \$150 monthly. They are given without commitment either on the part of the worker or the agency about future employment. At the moment we have two students with us not on a fellowship basis. Neither of these students will remain with the agency after completion of their field work here since they do have commitments to return to the agency in which they have been employed. The scholarship and fellowship plan has been helpful in recruiting and holding workers. We probably do not put as much emphasis on these plans as we might if we were unable, as a rule, to have a full staff of fully trained workers."

Another method of financing professional education is typified by a Catholic Diocesan Agency which reports 4 scholarships, 3 given by Catholic women's groups. A number of agencies have special scholarship funds but the great majority budget for this item every year as a part of the current operating budget. A number of agencies near schools of social work have a work-study plan whereby students carry an appreciably reduced case load and go to school at the same time as illustrated by the following:

"We have used work-study plans very selectively. For example, we have two work-study people now, one of whom is our last untrained worker. As a part of our help to her in securing training, we are not only paying her a pro-rated salary, but out of a special Staff Education Fund we are helping her with an additional amount to cover her tuition expenses. The second work-study

employee is a person of long experience in whom we had a great deal of conviction that she would turn out to be an unusual worker. . . ."

The variety of plans for encouraging professional education is to be expected. Some agencies will be located near schools of social work where they can also offer field work training and perhaps have a better opportunity to recruit personnel. Other agencies located at a distance from schools of social work will have to depend upon generous scholarship plans to recruit and hold workers. It seems clear that in the face of the tremendous shortage of child welfare workers, as well as social workers generally, few agencies can afford to be without some plan for staff training and recruiting.

The extensive professional educational programs operated by many state departments of public welfare have not only enriched the states sponsoring such programs but the entire field. It was interesting to note in the survey of scholarships and work-study plans two years ago, that all but 40 of the 150 private and public agencies answering the questionnaires had some arrangement for full or part-time study. In recent years, councils of social agencies have set up revolving funds earmarked for the professional training. We are delighted to be able to quote from the experience of Milwaukee County Community Fund and Council of Social Agencies. Report of the Student Aid Committee to the Social Planning Committee:

**"Method of Study:** After discussion of agencies' policies and practices in the use of scholarships, two questionnaires were sent to private case work agencies. One questionnaire asked for information from the agency, the other was to be filled out for individual students. Eight agencies replied and five agencies returned forms on a total of 43 students, giving data from the period of 1943 to the present. A ninth agency is known to have a scholarship plan but did not reply to either questionnaire.

**"Findings:** Scholarships to secure personnel have been used intermittently or continuously by several agencies since the early 1920's. Eight private case work agencies have used scholarships in this period. Four are Fund-supported, four are not. Three participate in scholarships from outside sources and are not included in this study. Of the five agencies which returned information on individual students, three are Fund and two are non-Fund. Of the 43 students reported, 13 are still in school, 11 withdrew voluntarily or at the request of the agency or school before completion of training, 19 completed their training and worked according to the agreement between the student and the agency made at the time the scholarship was granted. The total amount paid to all the students included in the study except those currently attending school was \$21,461.92. Of this amount \$16,331.67 was paid to the students of Fund agencies; \$12,670 was paid to Fund agency students who completed the educational plan, all of whom worked according to the agreement. Eleven of these persons are still employed. The primary purpose of scholarships is the recruitment of trained personnel, and the training of existing personnel. In a few instances the scholarship was offered as a contribution to the social work field with no expectation of employment of that stu-



dent. The shortage of professional personnel became more serious during the war and has continued. No lessening of the shortage is anticipated.

**"Conclusions:** (1) Scholarship plans are an essential and effective means of recruiting personnel. (2) Salaries currently paid in social work are not sufficiently attractive to encourage enough college graduates to use their own resources for two years of graduate study or to borrow money in order to finance their graduate training. (3) There is increasing emphasis upon professional education as a qualification for employment. (4) Commitments generally are necessary at present but should not be established as permanent policy. (5) Scholarships should be granted on basis of ability and prospective contribution to social work as well as on basis of need. (6) Agencies have found it necessary to make different financial plans with each student. Therefore, it is not possible to prepare budgets on a set amount per student. (7) Trends are definitely upward in both number and amount of the grant because of higher tuition and cost of living and more competition in the field.

**"Recommendations:** On the basis of the above study and conclusions, the committee recommended that: (1) There be reaffirmation on the conclusions of the Social Planning Committee in 1943. *A.* They reaffirm the principle and policy which has been in operation over a period of years, of permitting agencies to develop scholarships, leave of absence plans and other methods of securing and keeping trained personnel. They look with favor on plans submitted by individual agencies in presenting budgets which will enable them to carry out these plans. *B.* That agencies continue to offer scholarships to recruit personnel, each Community Fund agency desiring to grant scholarships presenting its particular plan or plans to the Budget Committee. . . *C.* That a committee be established in the Council to learn if local or state foundations have funds for education that might be available for scholarships in social work."

No agency can hope to use the scholarship plan in lieu of adequate salaries, good standards of service, supervision and administration. Scholarships and work-study plans are a complement to these essentials of agency administration and one method of improving services to clients. Probably many agencies would prefer to employ only fully trained workers. This is the prerogative of only advantageously located agencies in the face of the present staff shortage. Nor would these fortunate agencies be able to employ professionally qualified workers except for the fact that many agencies are co-operatively helping to increase the supply of trained personnel.

Current information is available on the scholarship and work-study plans of some 20 children's agencies located in various parts of the country well known for their experience in training. We would appreciate having the experience and plans of other agencies and your suggestions for increasing the number of professionally trained workers. A number of inquiries are received every month from students in schools of social work education requesting information on scholarships. We have referred some of these potential staff members to agencies offering scholarships and invite your comments on how best to bring interested agencies in touch with candidates for scholarships funds.

MARY C. KEELEY

## ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Continued from page 9)

actively as possible the relationship of the program to the community. Every effort must be made constantly to increase the prestige and respect for the agency. In other words, they must show and convince the community how much it needs the services rendered, and keep convincing them day in and day out.

The Board has always acted as an effective source of community reaction. The successful acceptance by the public of new procedures, new ideas, can generally be ascertained by discussion with several members of the Board. Present-day administrators are constantly trying out new ideas on their Board members before attempting any innovation in existing agency practices.

The Board has given continuity and permanence to the work of the agency. In most cases today, Board membership is a slowly changing membership that is constantly in tune with the basic philosophy that justifies the agency's continuing existence.

### Where Are We Going?

Thus we see our position today and remind ourselves of several obligations that every Board member has acquired through the years and must accept. So much for where we are—now, where are we going, or will we just sit and "twiddle our fingers"?

Now is the hour to acknowledge the dynamic forces which brought the well-done work of the past to its present recognized position in the community. Now we must consolidate the gains made thus far and stimulate additional gains tomorrow and the day after. A strong living force must be generated, growing steadily and surely, not just a shot in the arm or a quick burst of speed. Social service needs to keep a permanent spring in its step. It is a Board function to provide such confidence in the staff that will make that spring perpetual.

Back in the good old days, we are told, life was simpler. Board members knew each other and the work of the agency more intimately, often working side by side, performing tasks that only professional staff people can do effectively today. Enthusiasm was high. It had to be high to carry them over the obstacles of their day. No longer do Board members double as staff members. Board activities now are more circumscribed, but the responsibilities are greater. The primeval period is past, but the pioneering period will never end for Boards that are willing

to recognize and accept the challenge that confronts every private non-profit community service organization that is sponsored by a volunteer Board.

There is always a bigger job ahead. We must organize our task forces, revitalize our thinking, appraise and set up new goals. We must do these things calmly, thoughtfully, without beating the drums and engaging in useless chatter. We have grown more mature. Our enthusiasm will not have the effervescent quality of youth but will run deeper within us, last longer, carry us farther.

Now is the hour to remember that real leadership requires understanding based upon study and courage rooted in conviction. If every member of a board had to represent his organization occasionally in a way that called for pleading the case for that organization—justifying it, explaining it, selling it—he would soon generate an inner dynamic force that would make him twice as valuable before the public, as well as in strictly Board matters. While it may not be reasonable to expect every Board member to be a triple-threat man, he does acquire a more creative attitude when his particular abilities are recognized and exploited. Too often Board membership means only dutiful attendance at monthly meetings with no challenge to the individual capacity and ability. Ability seems to be something that improves with use and disappears with neglect.

With the present widespread existence of experienced, well-trained professional staffs, the challenge to the Board member is greater than ever before. Today's Board member must be better informed, more alert, more open-minded and consistently seeking the greater service possible through well-supported, professional service to the community.

### **Robert M. Mulford**

**General Secretary,**

**Massachusetts S.P.C.C., Boston, Mass.**

**MR. RAWLEY** in his article on essential functions of a Board member has clearly indicated how an idea can develop into a program. As he has indicated, we need to think a great deal more about what constitutes administrative process, and with special emphasis on that process in the field of social work. Board members undoubtedly get many of their ideas about their responsibilities from agency executives just as many of them think of administration in terms of the manipulative techniques used by some executives.

The emphasis which I found lacking in his article was in relation to the Board's responsibility for choosing and supervising an executive. The first step in

protecting the service to the client is achieved by appointing and supervising a competent executive. It would be interesting to make a survey on the thoroughness with which Boards approach the job of selecting an executive—then a few years later to survey the way in which the same Boards supervised the executive. Perhaps the word supervise is not exactly descriptive of relationship between executive and Board but since the Board has the responsibility for hiring and evaluating his work and if necessary discharging the executive, it is essentially in a supervisory relationship to the executive. One reason there is so little clarity on this point is that most Boards probably do not recognize the responsibility for supervision of the executive and therefore do not carry it out. Thus we have situations in which an executive is described as a fellow who "can make his Board do anything he wants." It was interesting for me in reading Mr. Rawley's article to wonder at what point the people with a conscience who developed the agency lost their feeling of responsibility for the agency and gave it to the professionals. I also wondered whether or not the professionals were responsible for the Board members' lack of continued interest in protecting the service to the client. We as executives need to study this problem and analyze what we do to make Board members feel less responsible and act less responsibly in this important function which we share with them. Are we afraid to have them too concerned about the efficiency and competency of the service? Are we taking over some of their responsibility because it is easier for us that way? Are we seeing administration as a managerial process or as a professional process? The Board's evaluation of the executive, its choosing of an executive, will vary according to its concept of the administrative function.

How does the Board know whether or not it has a good executive? If it adheres to the managerial concept of administration, it will judge the executive in terms of his ability to create order and efficiency from the top down with proper "discipline and respect for authority" all down the line. If on the other hand it understands administration as a professional process (and its understanding of this process will depend upon interpretation of it by the executive), there are a number of questions which the Board can ask itself. Does the executive possess a background of professional training and/or experience which enables him to evaluate the total agency program and the quality of the services to the client? Does he hold the respect of the staff and his colleagues in other social agencies? Does he tell the Board the bad things about the service as well as the good? Does he discuss the problems as well as the successes? Does he tend to

operate a "one man show" or does he depend on the skills of other staff members? Does he work with the staff in such a way that he is permissive and challenging rather than authoritative and driving? Does he take over Board functions or does he constantly interpret his concept of Board responsibility and lead the Board to meet its responsibility? Does he take the initiative in getting the Board and staff together to discuss agency problems and policies? Does he take leadership in helping the Board to examine agency function, policies and needs? Does he point up unmet needs and help the Board to become aware of methods to meet these needs? Are Board members enthusiastic about working with him on agency and community problems? Does he stimulate the Board to a desire to know the details and problems in connection with the physical plant, finances, personnel practices, public relations as well as staff and program? Does he have a realistic approach to agency finances and does he operate within a carefully prepared and well-interpreted budget? Does he see the agency as a part of a community social work pattern and does he participate and encourage Board participation in community planning?

Does he stimulate the Board to take social action when agency experience points up unmet needs in the community or conditions which need changing? Does he make clear the relationship between competent staff, adequate salaries, good personnel practices, high professional standards and the protection of the service to the client?

And, finally, does he encourage the Board to continually evaluate the agency's program and service and his performance as executive? If the Board member says that he cannot answer these questions, he is either a poor Board member or the executive is not doing a good job, or both. If the Board member turns all of the responsibility over to the executive, he of course will not be able to answer these questions and he will have failed his responsibility to protect the service to the client.

In connection with Mr. Rawley's second point I feel that the emphasis on Board-executive responsibilities is equally important. The Board can maintain its responsible relationship to the community and clientele only if the executive measures up in the terms implied in the questions posed. A truly responsible Board will ask these questions and will hire or keep an executive only when he measures up. A truly responsible executive will welcome and encourage the asking of them because he too has a responsibility to protect the service to the client. Executives may come and go, but trustees continue on to test each new executive and see that the service to the client continues uninterrupted and efficient.

## BOARD RATES IN 1948

THE problem of shortage of foster homes still seems to be a major one in the field of child placement. Housing shortage no doubt plays an important part. The answers to the questionnaire on board rates issued in November, 1948, give some interesting side lights.

Of the 99 agencies which responded in time to have their material appear in the compilation, every agency found it necessary to increase the board rate. Increased cost of living was given as the reason in 65 cases. In 8 more, inadequacy of the old rate was given as the reason, and in 12 others request of the foster parent was given as the reason. Foster parents do not ordinarily ask for an increase in board rates unless they can show that the fee does not cover the actual cost of care. That means that in 85 instances where board rate was increased, it was due to the fact that an inadequate amount was being paid. That is, over 50% of the changes were necessitated by the fact that the prevailing rate had been inadequate to meet the cost. Another interesting fact was that in 4 instances the rate was increased because independent or commercial homes were paying so much higher rate of board that the competition was too keen. It has been recognized for years that the social agency is not in a position to meet the rate paid the independent placements. Many foster mothers recognize this differential but prefer the relationship with the social agency. It would therefore almost be safe to think that in those four instances, too, the amount paid was so inadequate that comparison with payment to commercial boarding homes was a factor to be reckoned with. In one instance we were pleased to note that an increase had been made in order to "eliminate race differentials." There are still a number of inexcusable discriminations practiced. We say inexcusable because in those instances there is no comparable differential in cost of living. Two other agencies mentioned an increase "to reduce" race differentials.

In estimating the new board rate about half of the agencies used food plus four other items such as rent, incidentals, laundry, household expenses as a basis. Twenty-seven agencies used an arbitrary uncomputed rate. Again this points to a more realistic approach in determining board rates.

Age, physical condition and behavior are the basis for the largest variations in board rate. Sixty-two agencies noted variations on the basis of age; 57 on the basis of physical condition; 49 on the basis of behavior problems. Infancy and adolescence were the two age groups which had the largest number of differentials. In 40 instances the differential was made



on the basis of adolescence only. The percentages of increase are significant too. In the instances of serious physical handicaps, like some "crippling" conditions, the increases over and above the base rate were, in instances, over 100%; in one instance 174%.

One way in which an increase was given to foster parents without taking the responsibility of establishing a fixed rate was in the expenditures for which the foster mother was permitted to bill the agency. An increasing number of agencies permitted billing for an increasing number of items. Some of these are such regularly anticipated expenditures that they might as well have been added to the board rate and save the agency and the foster parent the nuisance of dealing with bills. Several agencies commented that they are "working toward including many of these in the board rate." Two of the most troubling problems before the board rate was raised were that "some foster mother wanted to take too many children" and "applicants refused to take children when they learned the board rate." The following are some of the recommendations as to the effect of increase in board rates:

- Better services to children
- Better homes obtained
- Improved morale of the foster parents
- Foster parents accept supervision more readily
- Existing homes easier to retain.

One agency noted a 60% increase in applications by prospective foster parents. The following figures are significant: In 1946 the median board rate for the country was \$30 to \$31.99; in 1948 it was \$36 to \$36.99. In 1946 the lowest board rate (reported to the League) paid in any part of the country was \$19 per month. In 1948 it was \$22.

The 1946 report showed that there were 97 board rate revisions made by 92 agencies. In 1948, 146 board rate revisions were reported by the 99 agencies.

In 1948 the average rate of board paid a foster mother by a reporting League agency was \$35 and the average median rate was \$36+. The lowest average rate was paid in the Southwest; the amount \$30.99 was 14.28% below the general average. The highest average was paid by the Middle Atlantic and Midwestern states and amounted from \$39 to \$39.99, or 11.42% above the general average. The lowest median rate was also paid in the Southwest. Again the amount was from \$30 to \$30.99, an amount over 17% below the median for all the reporting agencies. The Middle Atlantic states paid the highest median rate, between \$40 and \$40.99, an amount 11.42% above the median for all the agencies.

The complete report on "Board Rates in 1948" will be available shortly after February 1.

And finally a significant development is the number of agencies that are paying a service fee. Over 26 agencies which participated in this study include service as an item in estimating the board rate. Only twelve state an exact amount. The range is from a token fee of \$5.00 per month to \$25.00. These are the amounts per month and the occasional comments:

- \$5.00 and up
- \$5.00 to \$20.00, depending on age and problem presented by child
- \$6.00 for school-age child
- \$9.50
- \$10.50 to \$13.50
- \$10.00 to \$15.00
- Up to \$20 in special situations
- \$15.00 for school age
- \$25 for infants

Some of these are clearly token fees. Their significance is in the psychological effect of recognizing that the foster mother is doing a job, that the responsibility she is carrying is being shared by the agency. In other instances the fee does cover some of the actual service given by the foster mother. None who do give such recognition have felt that the foster family gives the child less loving care than when no fee was included for service.

H. L. G.

### Newly Accredited Members

Children's Division  
CITY OF CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE  
25 South Damen Avenue  
Chicago 12, Illinois  
Roman L. Haremski, *Director*

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, INC.  
105 East Joppa Road  
Towson 4, Maryland  
Miss L. Margaretta Culver, *Director*

### New Provisional

ROCHESTER CHILDREN'S NURSERY  
133 Exchange Street  
Rochester 4, New York  
Mrs. Alfreda F. Yeomans, *Director*

## A BOARD MEMBER SPEAKS ON

### *Community Planning for Child Welfare\**

**BOARDS** of Directors of child welfare agencies have traditionally assumed the responsibility for planning for children who must have help to lead a normal and stable life. Just what these policy-making responsibilities are, and what can be done to effectively carry them out, has not always been analyzed. The pattern varies from community to community, but because children cannot be their own spokesmen the charge to provide the best possible services in their behalf remains constant.

First, children's agency Boards must recognize that their organization cannot operate alone. It is part of a whole community pattern and should be integrated into the total resources of the community. To be sure, child welfare agencies have a specialized knowledge and concern, but Boards and staff cannot do the job in an isolated setting.

At times the Boards have tended to be a little like the small English boy whom we had living with us during the war.

We sent Sandy to a nursery school just after he became three years old. After a few days of this experience I asked Sandy how he liked school. "I like school very much," said he, "I like my teachers very much." "How about the other children?" I queried. "Oh," said Sandy, "I like the other children, too, but I don't like them as much as I like me."

Every agency cannot become an over-all community planner, but each can examine its agency in relation to the community need and try to fit into the pattern as wisely as possible.

#### **Know Your Own Agency**

What would you set out to do if you had recently joined the Board of a children's agency? The first responsibility would be to see what sort of reputation the agency has, both locally and nationally; what standard of service it is providing, and how it rates in quantity as well as quality. This is no small assignment. It would draw the inquiring Board member into a variety of community contacts. A considerable amount of study and reading of current social work publications would be required. In other words, the Board member would need to become thoroughly informed as to the place of his agency in the community social service program. The Board member, in probably every community, will be challenged by the many unmet needs. Seeking to know

about and to co-ordinate agency programs will help us to look beyond his own agency.

In one agency the Board realized the extent of unmet needs for the particular children whom they traditionally accepted as their charge. They tried their best to alleviate the very crucial situation in which this group of children were found. In their effort to be helpful, they had lost sight of the fact that a child welfare agency must add something to the sum total of the life of the children entrusted to its care, and were unaware that their standards of service were becoming alarmingly low. They were disheartened when the spotlight of community criticism was turned upon them for violating minimum standards of custodial care. A sense of balance would have saved many a heartache. These troubled Board members called upon their Council of Social Agencies and the Child Welfare League of America to help them to find out what steps to take, both to improve their own agency standards and to see that increased coverage was provided. Now this agency has adjusted the amount of service they can give to a budget that they can reasonably expect to raise annually. Every member of the Board and staff is fully aware of the standards that the community expects them to meet. However they have not shut their eyes to the unmet needs of the community, but have taken on a degree of leadership in spurring other agencies to make their programs supplementary ones.

#### **Funds Must Be Raised**

Perhaps the most accepted Board responsibility is that of fund-raising. Some people feel aggrieved when asked to take leadership in providing agency funds. Others feel it is the Board's only function. Somewhere in between, perhaps, is a happy medium. Interest and knowledge of the program is a necessity but there can be no program without money. It is a clear-cut Board responsibility to tap all community resources to achieve their goal. All too frequently Boards fail to use imagination and initiative in fund-raising and mournfully accept a restricted agency program because of limited resources. One agency that annually raised \$600 to supplement the interest on its capital funds, and had complained that they could not expand or improve their program today raises \$120,000 annually. It has strengthened its own ranks from every part of the community. It has abandoned the concept that child welfare is "just a woman's

\* Presented at National Conference of Social Work, 1948.

job" and now has a mixed Board as well as a widely representative one.

In a Community Chest city, fund-raising is just as much the responsibility of the Board member of a child welfare agency as if the agency raised its own individual funds. Each agency's Board members should give time, thought and effort to its Community Chest drive. Your agency will reap the benefit of your increased interest, perhaps not directly, but through the subtle channel of your concern and interest.

### Encourage Interagency Co-operation

Another Board responsibility is engaging in co-operative effort to insure the necessary community coverage. In my own community there is still, unfortunately, an alarming lack of foster homes for babies. In New York City, a per capita subsidy is paid to voluntary agencies of the three religious denominations for the care of children of each faith, who must be placed. There is no long-term foster care program under direct public auspices. It had been the custom of each religious group to do its own home finding. Faced with this critical lack of foster homes, particularly for young children, the agencies decided on a joint home-finding campaign. For the first time in the history of New York City the voluntary child care agencies forgot their traditional separateness and worked on a joint and mutually beneficial project. The problem of finding foster homes was not solved by this co-operative venture, but it was greatly alleviated. An important by-product was an increased understanding of each other's programs and a distinct trend to improve individual agency policies so as to take the best advantage of the foster home pool. When the time limit set to end the project arrived, the agencies decided to continue their joint efforts.

Another result of the joint approach to home finding was a growing realization that the private and public agencies were mutually dependent. When the Department of Welfare decided to initiate a home-finding project, the Boards of these agencies voted to make their staffs available in order that that effort might be better integrated into the total program.

Voluntary Boards and staffs frequently have the opportunity for trail blazing which is not always possible in a public agency. They sometimes have funds for special exploratory projects. But the voluntary agency Board member has a great responsibility for giving all children the benefit of the best possible service. In this light, public and private enterprise are not competitive. Each has a stake in the other's program. Close co-operation and good working rela-

tionships between public and private bodies can produce miracles.

Each one of us draws on our own experience. During my most recent Board member days I have seen such really encouraging results from public and private agencies working together. In my own city the welfare of mentally defective children under five years of age is now being jointly explored. Temporary detention facilities are the subject of citizen concern. School facilities and guidance centers for mentally and physically handicapped children are being established under joint auspices. Housekeeper and home-maker services are being expanded. Recreational centers, which are co-operative, maintained by public and private groups, are just a sampling of what private agencies and public agencies can achieve when each recognizes the responsibility to work together.

### Executive Responsibility

Splendid gains can be achieved if Boards and staffs of agencies develop good working relationships. It is essential for them to have mutual respect for each other's opinions. Board members cannot treat their executive as hired help, and expect to encourage real leadership. Nor can an executive disregard his or her Board contribution and expect harmonious and constructive results. Good agency practices cannot be achieved without teamwork. Perhaps in this relationship the major responsibility belongs to the executive. *A Board is as good as its executive.*

A good deal has been said about ideal Board constituency and procedures. Perhaps not enough recognition is given to the Board members' desire to serve the community and the satisfaction they get out of serving it well. Executives sometimes are so identified with the agency's burdens and budgets that they do not draw out the best potentialities in their Boards. I have seen the same Board do a distinctly unacceptable job for years and under different leadership become one of the community's most constructive forces. When the Board was given an opportunity to serve, which involved sacrifices and increased burdens, they responded magnificently.

One group changed an outmoded traditional program to a new and dynamic type of service. This was accomplished with the very same Board, although the Board, as well as the staff leadership, eventually was changed and revitalized.

One executive of an agency in a moderate size town which was greatly hampered by the low board rate which the agency was currently paying finally shared his concern with the Board. They accepted the challenge by deciding to pay an even higher rate than



he had dared suggest. They met their own recommendation. Boards can often rise to new heights of service if the executive will help them raise their sights. So often executives tend to protect their Boards rather than to point out to them community needs that must be met.

### Interpretation

Another very important Board member responsibility is interpretation. This should be a two-way circuit in keeping the agency aware of community needs and trends and telling the general public what welfare services, and for us child welfare, really can mean. I am afraid that Board members have failed in a great measure to interpret the services. Citizens are confused as to what we are trying to do, and how and for whom we are trying to do it. The nationwide so-called "economies of service" are a tragic demonstration of our lack of skill in interpreting our network of services. We can see that all too clearly by the recent destructive investigation in New York City, a similar one a year ago in Baltimore, and by the curtailment of day care services throughout the country.

We have a real challenge before us. It is each Board member's responsibility to examine the structure of public and private assistance and to defend the right of all our citizens, particularly our potential citizens—our children—to a decent and dignified way of life. Citizens' groups, such as councils of social agencies and committees like the Citizens Committee for Children of New York City, can do much to support and advance the interests of children.

Just as a Board can rise to new heights if given the opportunity, so can the general public. Sometimes it seems discouraging but real community planning for Child Welfare can be achieved if we Board members provide the consecration and leadership.

DOROTHY L. BERNHARD

*First Vice-President, Child Welfare League of America*

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### Board Rates for Children Increased

*Excerpts from the opinion of the President Judge of the Municipal Court, Philadelphia Pa., November 22, 1948.*

**T**HE power of the court to fix a fair and reasonable sum for the support and maintenance of delinquent, dependent and neglected children, either in foster homes or in suitable institutions, has never been challenged.

In Philadelphia this important social work has been carried forward by a number of societies incor-

porated in whole or in part for that purpose. Some of them receive state aid and contributions from private persons.

On several occasions in the past, these societies have joined in petitioning the court for an increase in the amount paid by the county for the support of such children, due to the increased cost of maintenance. The last order was made by the late President Judge, Charles L. Brown, effective January 1, 1947. Judge Brown increased the order for children placed in institutions from \$6.00 per week to \$8.50 per week and for children placed in family homes from \$7.25 to \$10.50 per week.

Of course it is a matter of common knowledge that the cost of maintenance has substantially increased since the last order and the various social agencies concerned with placing children put into their care by the court have encountered increasing financial difficulties. Twenty-eight associations have joined together in presenting to the court a petition for an increase in the present order.

Some of the agencies have stated, through their counsel, that it is necessary for them to draw upon their capital to meet deficits, others that they must obtain funds from other sources to meet deficits, but all of them state that unless the county comes to their aid with a substantial increase, the situation for the future will be very precarious.

The court is satisfied that the evidence establishes the need for an increase in the sums now being paid to the various agencies for the care of children.

It must be kept in mind that the various child-placing societies and agencies, by accepting the commitments of the court answer the great question of where to commit the child when that becomes necessary. Without such societies and agencies the court would be practically helpless and therefore the court recognizes the great debt which the taxpayers, the county and society generally owes to them.

Accordingly, it is hereby ordered and decreed that the board, clothing, necessary medical and surgical care and supervision of children committed to these various child-placing bodies, agencies and societies shall, from the first day of January, 1949, be the sum of \$10.20 per week for institutional care of each child, and \$12.60 per week for each child placed in a family home.

### A Nation-wide Open Competitive Examination

*Residence requirements are not waived frequently enough.*

**T**HE Los Angeles County Civil Service Commission announces a nation-wide open competitive examination for the position of Director, Bureau of Adop-

tions. This Bureau is a newly created agency in the county of Los Angeles, and has been set up to administer a child adoption program for the county. It is anticipated that as the Bureau's program becomes better known, its facilities will expand and a wider field will be developed. It is planned that the examination will be given in Los Angeles and in other cities as warranted by the number of applications received.

The proposed salary is \$440.00 per month, with provision for annual increases to \$545.00 per month at the end of the fourth year. Completion of a 2-year graduate curriculum in an accredited school of social work, including supervised field work in each year and 5 years' recent, paid, full-time administrative experience in a recognized public or private child-placing agency, of which 2 years must have been as a director of an adoption program are the proposed requirements.

Persons interested may secure applications and full information from the Los Angeles County Civil Service Commission, Room 102, Hall of Records, Los Angeles 12, California.

## BOOK NOTE

MENTAL HEALTH IN MODERN SOCIETY, by THOMAS A. C. Rennie, M.D., and LUTHER E. WOODWARD, Ph.D. The Commonwealth Fund, N. Y. 1948. \$4.00.

The scope of this volume is as far-reaching as the title would imply. In fact, one wonders whether there are not two books rather than one.

The authors begin by outlining in some detail the mental health problems noted in World War II, the plans and treatment methods used by the armed forces from the point of induction to discharge, services to veterans, and studies of the effectiveness of such services, particularly through the New York Hospital Rehabilitation Clinic with which both authors were connected. This part of the book is clearly illustrated with case studies and with charts showing the structure of mental health services in the armed forces. Although there is a review of past history which seems less vital to this reviewer than later portions of the book that deal with the present and future, it is an informative and useful summary of factual material not conveniently available elsewhere. The excellent documentation with bibliographies attached to each chapter adds greatly to the

value of this volume for anyone who wishes to use it as a starting point for further study.

The second portion of the book takes up the contribution that various professions can make to the adjustment of the veteran and his family. The physician, the social worker, the psychologist, the pastor, and the employer are considered in turn with attention to historical development, description of professional training, and specific suggestions regarding the manner in which each group may participate more fully in the extension of its service in treating mental health problems. A review of methods of interviewing and counseling is followed by a discussion of the place of sound family living and educational planning in the development of emotional stability. The closing chapter treats the imperative need for medical and social scientists to solve the problem of human relations if world peace is to be achieved.

While the latter portions of this book seem directed toward an audience less well oriented to mental health problems than the professionally trained social worker, there are values for the latter in perspective and perhaps increased understanding of the contributions of some of the allied professions.

This book could serve as a valuable source of interpretation to the public and to our friends in other professions. The treatment of social work is particularly sympathetic and informative, although the emphasis is naturally too slanted toward psychiatric social work to give a clear picture of the profession as a whole.

On the negative side, the social worker may see some danger in the encouragement the authors offer a variety of professions to practice psychotherapy without the discipline in professional training and supervision which we find so essential. There are warnings of the need to use the psychiatrist for the severely disturbed cases and for consultation, but we are familiar with the ease with which such warnings are forgotten, particularly when psychiatrists are unavailable. We might also quibble with minor points such as the suggestion that the baby be taught independence by placing his bottle on a pillow so that he may learn to feed himself. However, this is unimportant to the reader who feels the total impact of this book in a stirring of new vision of what might be done through wide cooperation in development of programs conducive to mental health.

AASE GEORGE

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# ESSENTIALS IN DAY CARE SERVICES

Excerpt from BULLETIN (NOW CHILD WELFARE), September, 1947  
Child Welfare League of America

GROUP care in day nurseries or child care centers is appropriate for children between the ages of two and a half and ten years, for whom satisfactory care cannot be provided in their own homes.

•••

THE combined skills of education, medicine and social casework are essential in any group day care program.

•••

THE admission of children to a day nursery or child care center should be based upon a consideration of the needs of the individual child. In order to plan satisfactorily for the group care of any child, there must be participation by the parents, the caseworker, the teacher and the pediatrician.

•••

GROUPS of children should be separated according to age and maturity.

•••

THE teacher assigned to each group of preschool children should be a qualified nursery school teacher.

•••

THE teacher assigned to each group of school-age children should have had teacher training and experience in recreation programs for children of elementary school age, or specialized training in the recreation or group work field.

•••

THERE should be provision for a well-balanced program of indoor and outdoor activities, rest and nutrition, suitable for each group.

•••

A qualified physician, preferably a pediatrician, on the staff of the nursery or center, should make all pre-admission physical examinations of children and periodic re-examinations and should determine the health policies and procedure for children and staff.

•••

A qualified caseworker, preferably a member of the staff, should be responsible for application interviews and for a continuous relationship with parents as long as their children receive care in the nursery or center.

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